

Department of Public Health
and Human Services

Section:
WORK REGISTRATION

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Subject:
Overview

Supersedes: FS 700 (10/01/05)

References: 7 CFR 273.7, Food Stamp Act Section 6(D)(2)

GENERAL RULE - At **application and recertification**, the OPA Case Manager must explain to the applicant/participant the consequences of a household member quitting a job, reducing hours of employment or failing to comply with other work registration requirements. As a condition of eligibility the household must also cooperate in providing sufficient information regarding employment status and availability for work. The HCS-543A (Food Stamp Program Work Registration Understanding and Agreement) form is used to register mandatory work registrants and informs all household members of work registration program requirements. The form is mandatory for all households except those in which all members are exempt from work registration (FS 701-1). **Only one signature from any responsible household member is required**, attesting to the registration of all mandatory registrants. If no one in the household age 16 or older will sign the HCS-543A, all **mandatory** individuals are disqualified (FS 705-1).

Work registration status is recorded on the TEAMS Work Registration/Food Stamps (WOLF) screen. The WOLF screen must be coded correctly based on FS 701-1 and a TEAMS case note must be entered to document work registration information was provided via the HCS-543A. The WOLF screen code must be updated when a change of status occurs and at every recertification.

REGISTRATION PROCESS

The signed HCS-543A form is the only verification needed to meet the requirement of registering for work. Unless otherwise exempt, all members of a food stamp household who are at least age 16 and not yet 60 are required to register for work. When providing the form to the household, the OPA Case Manager lists the names of mandatory individuals on the form.

The OPA Case Manager must explain that work registration disqualifications also apply to individuals who lose their exempt status due to a violation (e.g., job quit or reduction in hours without good cause). Individuals who lose their exempt status must register for employment when the change is reported or at their next recertification or six month review depending on their reporting requirements (FS 1501-3 or FS 1501-4).

The OPA Case Manager is responsible for providing the participant with a work registration form and entering a case note indicating the date when the change is reported. Participants are responsible for returning the completed form to OPA within 10 calendar days from the date the form was provided to the household. If the participant fails to return the completed form, OPA must issue a notice of adverse action stating that the individual has been disqualified and why, but that the disqualification can be avoided by returning the form.

Those persons who lose their exemption due to a change in circumstances that is not subject to the reporting requirements must register for employment at the next recertification or six month report period. Any household member 16 years or older can sign the HCS-543A.

Example: Mike reported to his Case Manager that his physician released him to go back to work in the fourth month of his six month report period. The OPA Case Manager changes the WOLF screen to 'MA', enters a case note and sends Mike form HCS-543A to sign. Mike did not return the HCS-543A. In month six the OPA Case Manager sends a notice that his case will be closed if form HCS-543A is not returned.

The NCR copy of form HCS-543A should be given to the participant. The back of the participant's copy includes the work registration requirements, exemptions and the definition of unsuitable employment. A signed original must be in the case file for all households when all members are not work registration exempt (FS 701-1).

FSET

In addition to the basic work registration requirements, in counties where there is a Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) Program, (Lewis and Clark, Missoula, Silver Bow and Yellowstone Counties), OPA Case Managers are required to refer mandatory work registrants (coded 'MA' on WOLF) to the FSET Program. Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS) who have time limited benefits may lose benefits by not enrolling in FSET (FS 801-1). Form HCS/FS-001 is the FSET referral form.

NOTE: Once referred to FSET, the individual may chose not to enroll. This may affect benefits of ABAWDS who do not have any exemptions to the ABAWD time limits.